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SUBJECT: BAHRAIN FORMALLY REQUESTS G-8 FUNDING FOR BMENA
ENTREPRENEURSHIP CENTER

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1. (U) This is an action request; please see para 7.
2. (SBU) MFA Assistant Under Secretary for Coordination and Follow Up Shaikh Abdul Aziz bin Mubarak Al Khalifa February 27 summoned representatives of G-8 embassies to formally request their governments' financial support for the BMENA Center for Entrepreneurial Excellence in Bahrain (CEEB). (All G-8 countries were present except for Canada.) The Jordanian Ambassador and CEEB Executive Advisor also attended the meeting. Shaikh Abdul Aziz told the group it was "crunch time" to come up with assistance for the CEEB. The Center would need help for the first 2-3 years, after which time it would be self-sustaining through the support of regional governments, whose citizens will benefit from training provided by the CEEB. Financial support for the Center would help governments in the region answer citizens' questions about how the BMENA process has helped them.
3. (SBU) Shaikh Abdul Aziz said an excellent, qualified candidate for the Executive Director position had been identified. The Center now needs to obtain funding to bring him on board, and for future programming. The Center had reached a critical stage. If there is no response from the G-8 governments, the Center will have flowered and died away. The concept of the Center had been discussed thoroughly at the G-8 Sea Island summit and the Rabat and Manama Forums for the Future. It now needs practical support.
4. (SBU) The Executive Advisor described the Center's operations to date and distributed a three-year budget identifying the funding shortfall. He invited the G-8 representatives to attend a March 5 training session for young entrepreneurs. The participants expressed interest in attending.
5. (SBU) Pol/Econ Chief said that the U.S. was proud to have funded the Center from the beginning. The Center had been designed to get maximum bang for the buck. G-8 funding went exclusively toward staff compensation and program development, not buildings or other extraneous costs. He urged the other officials to request funding from their capitals. The UK representative said that her government had decided to fund the Center, calling it a very positive initiative. HMG will finance a specific program as part of the Center's activities. (Following the meeting, the UK rep told Pol/Econ Chief that she would ask London to request European Commission support for the Center.) The Japanese rep said his government was considering offering technical support for programming.
6. (SBU) The Russian and Italian officials asked about the possibility of private sector support for the CEEB. Shaikh Abdul Aziz said the private sector would step up, but its support was predicated upon the CEEB's long-term viability. He requested that the participants inform their capitals of the Bahraini request. He said he would schedule another meeting in one month's time to get their feedback.
7. (SBU) Action Request: Post recommends that Washington instruct Embassies in G-8 capitals to request host government support for the CEEB, referencing the February 27 meeting in Manama.

MONROE